

The Gallup Poll

Nixon Not Absolved By Transcripts

By George Gallup

PRINCETON, N.J.—President Nixon's release of the transcripts of the White House tapes on April 30 has not reduced the large percentage of Americans who believe the President was involved in a cover-up of Watergate or had advance knowledge of the incident.

The latest nationwide Gallup survey, conducted May 10 to 13, shows nearly three persons in four (73 per cent) holding the opinion that he was involved to some extent in the scandal.

The previous survey, in February, showed virtually the same proportion (71 per cent) holding the same opinion.

Opinions regarding Mr. Nixon's involvement, in fact, have shown remarkably little change since the question was first asked, nearly one year ago. In that first survey, conducted in early June, as many as 67 per cent of the public felt that the President played some role in the rapidly spreading scandal.

About one person in 12 in the latest survey (8 per cent) thinks the President actually planned the Watergate bugging. Another 26 per cent say he did not plan the bugging but knew about it before it took place. Nearly four in ten, 39 per cent, hold the view that he found out about it later.

Only 14 per cent express the view that Mr. Nixon had no knowledge of the bugging and spoke up as soon as he learned about it.

Since the February survey, the proportion saying he planned the bugging or knew about it before it took place has shown little change. At the same time, however, a 5-point increase is found in the percentage holding the belief that the President found out about the bugging after it occurred but tried to cover it up.

Those absolving him of any involvement have shown a slight decline since February—from 17 to 14 per cent.

Opinions on the issue continue to have a strongly partisan flavor. As many as a third of Republicans (32 per

cent) in the survey absolve Mr. Nixon of playing a role in the scandal. Among Democrats and independents, however, only 8 per cent hold this view.

This is the question asked:

Here are four statements concerning President Nixon's connection with the Watergate affair. Will you tell me which one comes closest to your own point of view? (A) Nixon planned the Watergate bugging from the beginning. (B) Nixon did not plan the bugging but knew about it before it took place. (C) Nixon found out about the bugging after it occurred, but tried to cover it up. (D) Nixon had no knowledge of the bugging and spoke up as soon as he learned about it.

	Plan- ned	Knew About	Cov- ered	No Know- ledge	No Opin- ion
May 10-13	8%	26%	39%	14%	13%
<i>(Nixon's release of tape transcripts)</i>					
Feb. 1-4	9	23	34	17	12
Nov. 2-5	10	22	34	15	9
Sept. 7-10	11	28	33	18	10
Aug. 17-20	9	24	40	23	4
Aug. 3-6	8	29	37	15	11
July 6-9	9	30	34	15	12
June 22-25	8	27	36	17	12
June 1-4	8	28	31	19	14

As reported recently, new developments, including Mr. Nixon's release of the transcripts, have had virtually no effect on his popularity rating. The latest survey (May 10-13) shows 25 per cent expressing approval of the way he is handling his job as chief executive with 61 per cent disapproving and 14 per cent undecided. The current approval figure matches his low point.

The previous survey on popularity, conducted in late April, showed closely comparable results: 26 per cent approved, 60 per cent disapproved, while 14 per cent were undecided.

The findings reported today are based on a nationwide survey of 1,543 adults, 18 and older, interviewed in person in more than 300 scientifically selected localities during the period May 10-13.

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